



Asbestos in imported building products

Background

In July 2016 asbestos was found in composite roof panels at the new Perth Children's Hospital. The roof panels were imported from China and classified as "asbestos free", but testing by a National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) accredited laboratory in Australia found they contained chrysotile (white) asbestos.

Asbestos has also been found in a range of imported building products across Australia, including fibre cement boards, expanded polystyrene panels and gaskets.

Contributing factors

- All forms of asbestos containing materials have been prohibited imports in Australia since 31 December 2003.
- Some countries still manufacture building products that contain asbestos, and classify the goods as "asbestos free" even though they contain a small proportion of asbestos.
- Certification provided to importers from overseas manufacturers that goods are asbestos free has sometimes been proven incorrect or unreliable.

Action required

1. Importers from countries that still manufacture asbestos-containing goods should be aware of the different definitions and standards applied to asbestos in the country of origin.
2. Obtain product testing results from the overseas manufacturer or supplier that the goods do not contain any amount of asbestos (testing should be carried out at an accredited laboratory equivalent to NATA).
3. Arrange for an independent test of the building product before it is initially shipped to Australia. NATA accredited laboratories in Australia and international equivalent laboratories are listed on the [NATA website](#);
4. Multiple shipments of the same building product will require additional random testing to check that the goods remain asbestos free.

Further information

- [Western Australian safety and health laws that apply to asbestos](#);
- The Asbestos and Eradication Agency has [Guidance for importers and exporters](#);
- The Department of Immigration and Border Protection has information about [prohibited asbestos imports](#).

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